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Farm Broadcasters Letter



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Communications

Washington, DC 20250-1340

Letter No. ^[i.e. 2652] 2552

March 4, 1994

MARKET SENSITIVE REPORTS -- Under a test project, USDA will release certain monthly crop reports at 8:30 a.m. rather than the usual 3 p.m. ET release. Beginning May 10 the Crop Production Report and the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates will be issued 6-1/2 hours early. If the results are successful, additional reports could be included. Under the current 3 p.m. release for reports, some foreign markets can now trade on USDA numbers before U.S. commodity markets open for business. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy says it is the intent of USDA to establish release times which best serve the interests of U.S. agriculture. **Contact: Jim Donald (202) 720-6030.**

FARM LABOR -- U.S. farms and ranches provided employment to 2.4 million people during January 1994. This compares with 2.5 million during the survey week in January 1993. Self-employed farm operators accounted for 1.3 million of the total. Farm operators paid their hired workers an average wage of \$6.54 per hour, up 14 cents from a year earlier. Workers paid on an hourly basis received an average \$6.11 per hour, up 12 cents from a year ago. Field workers received an average \$6.14 per hour, up 12 cents, and livestock workers earned \$5.75 per hour, up 11 cents. Benefits such as housing and meals were provided to 43 percent of hired workers, down 2 percent from a year ago. **Contact: Dean Groskurth (202) 690-3228.**

TESTING WHEAT -- USDA is proposing that a new testing service be established for pesticide residues in wheat. Under the U.S. Grain Standards Act, the new service operated by USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service would test for 32 pesticides residues. Testing would be conducted on a fee basis at the Grain Inspection Service technical center in Kansas City, MO. USDA is seeking comments on the proposal. Reply by March 30 to George Wollam, USDA, FGIS, P.O. Box 96454, Washington, D.C. 20090-6454, or FAX at (202) 720-4628. **Contact: Dana Stewart (202) 720-5091.**

DISASTER ASSISTANCE -- USDA has provided over \$2 billion in direct disaster assistance to the nine Midwest states affected by floods last year. The assistance includes crop disaster payments, crop insurance indemnity payments, emergency food stamps, commodities for group feeding, loans, and Emergency Watershed Protection projects. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy, coordinator of Federal long-term recovery efforts, says the payments from USDA, along with assistance from other Federal agencies and states, will help Midwest producers to recover from the effects of the weather disaster. **Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.**

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL DAY -- New products and new uses is the theme of the 40 exhibits featured at the National Agricultural Day celebration in Washington, D.C., March 17. Exhibit subjects range from using corn in windshield washer fluid, to use of wheat straw in walls for homes. Several USDA agencies will have exhibits at the event. **Contact: Jim Brownlee (202) 720-2091.**

MEAT SAFETY -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy says USDA will ask the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to approve the safety of treating red meats with irradiation to eliminate bacteria. Poultry received FDA approval in 1990, along with fruits and vegetables. Irradiation can kill the strain of E.coli that killed three children and sickened hundreds in the Pacific Northwest last year. **Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.**

CATTLE -- Cattle herd expansion continues at a slow rate, only 4 percent over the past 5 years. The slow growth will help maintain stable beef prices. The meat complex has adjusted to tight grain supplies. Producers have shifted to lower quality grain, and delayed placements by using more forage. But a good wheat crop this spring, and a normal spring planting season will be necessary to avoid further industry adjustments. **Contact: Ron Gustafson (202) 219-0767.**

PROGRAM SIGNUP -- The signup period will be conducted until April 29 for producers to participate in USDA's 1994 production adjustment and price support programs. A new feature of this year's program provisions is use of the Secretary's authority to permit the planting of 12 experimental and industrial crops on program idled acreage. Planting of the crops on Acreage Conservation Reserve will not result in reduction of deficiency payments for producers. Details and signup are available at county office's of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. **Contact: Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206.**

WELL WATER -- A study at the University of Georgia shows that nitrates are the most common contaminant found in well water, and most often found in shallow wells. Individuals who have prolonged exposure to high levels of nitrates can experience an oxygen deficit in the blood. The study found that shallow wells are more likely to contain dangerous levels of copper and lead. Wells that are surrounded by large tracts of farmland were found to be less likely to have contaminated water. **Contact: Dan Rahn (912) 681-5189.**

INSTANT INFO -- The current paper-based information delivery system is inadequate to keep pace with the needs of modern agriculture, prompting USDA's National Agricultural Library to begin providing full electronic access to its information. To achieve the electronic library goal, the National Agricultural Library will convert its own publications from print to electronic media, shift and add resources to acquire and make available information in electronic format, and connect to electronic networks worldwide. The system will allow the Library's collection to be computer accessed by anyone, anywhere. The goal of January 1, 1995 is set as the date that electronic information becomes the preferred medium for library materials. The National Agricultural Library, the largest agricultural library in the world, is one of three national libraries in the United States. The other two are the Library of Congress and the National Library of Medicine. **Contact: Brian Norris (301) 504-6778,**

REDUCING THE RISK -- A primary risk factor for heart disease is lack of regular exercise. Moderate exercise, such as walking, gardening, biking, swimming, jogging or dancing for a half-hour three times a week, is sufficient to decrease risk. The kinds and amounts of foods eaten can also help reduce the chances of a heart attack. Reduced sodium intake and shedding extra pounds can help lower high blood pressure. High levels of blood cholesterol can be lowered through proper diet. Eat less animal fat, and eat more water-soluble dietary fiber. Use polyunsaturated vegetable oils to replace saturated fat in cooking. Use soft margarines. **Contact: Ruth Patrick (504) 388-1425.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1917 -- The techniques and importance of family traditions to future generations is discussed by **Brenda Curtis** with a family life specialist. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1399 -- Chemicals and lawn care; supermarkets, how are they doing; getting the lead out of your garden; smuggled birds can cause health problems; potatoes, fresh vs. processed. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE FEATURES #1909 -- Details on new loan rates and deficiency payments; USDA unveils crop insurance proposal; where's the pork?; U.S. farmers facing more competition; update on ethanol program. (Weekly reel of features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1662 -- A pharmaceutical herbicide?; a perfume protects kiwi; a late blight inhibitor; natural alternatives; "farmaceuticals?" (Weekly reel of research feature stories.) *PLEASE NOTE: This is the final tape of this series.*

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Thursday, March 10, U.S. crop production, world ag supply & demand; Friday, March 11, cotton update, aquaculture outlook, world grain/ag production, world oilseed situation; Monday, March 14, feed update, oilcrops update; Tuesday, March 15, crop & weather update, milk production; Thursday, March 17, sugar/sweetener outlook; Friday, March 18, cattle on feed, agricultural outlook summary; Monday, March 21, ag chemical usage. These are the **USDA reports we know about in advance**. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359

COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Eric Parsons reports on provisions of the 1994 farm program signup.

ACTUALITIES -- Secretary of Agriculture **Mike Espy** and Federal Crop Insurance Corporation manager **Ken Ackerman** on crop insurance reform proposal.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- March 10 & 12, A 5-part series on Precision Farming by **Pat O'Leary**. Part 1, USDA scientists are developing a new input application system called Precision Farming. Part 2, Satellites are used to pinpoint locations in fields. Part 3, Remote sensing technology gives farmers a clear view of field problem areas. Part 4, Field maps save money and protect the environment. Part 5, Hi-tech spreaders and sprayers are programmed to treat only problem areas. Each segment about 2:20.

*Available on Satellite **Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT; Saturdays 10:00 a.m., EDT; Mondays 8:00 a.m., EDT.***

OFFMIKE

POSSIBILITY OF FLOODING...is on the minds of producers served by **Tony Randall** (KXRB, Sioux Falls, SD). The ground is saturated and normal precipitation is forecast. Producers are questioning whether the disaster payment being received this year for crops damaged last year counts as '93 or '94 income. It could influence how the '94 crop is marketed. Tony says feed corn is in short supply. Elevators are charging a 10-15 cent per bushel premium.

A SURVEY...of maple syrup producers in north central Ohio is being conducted by **Cheryl Lynn** (WBCO, Bucyrus, OH). The sap is running, and if the weather cooperates it could be a good year. The station is also operating a tree trivia contest that offers tree seedlings as prizes. Cheryl says she's from the Chicago suburbs, and that covering agriculture since last July has been an enjoyable learning experience.

PRODUCERS...begin syrup operations in mid-March, says **Bob Flint** (WCFR, Springfield, VT). They've had a hard-freeze winter, and now need a spring that doesn't get too warm too quickly.

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CHANGE...in programming is underway, says **Gary Kinnett** (WACF/WPRF, Paris, IL). Gary has been promoted to general manager of the stations. He will produce farm programming for the stations as well as continuing to air his material at WIAI, Danville, IL. He's changing the Paris outlets from automation to live. Gary says the owners recognize the value and influence of farm broadcasting and membership in NAFB.

FORMAT CHANGES...are being undertaken on USDA radio's weekly cassette service to improve our service to broadcasters. The News Feature Five series ends with the mailing of March 8, allowing additional time on the cassette for material outside the usual format and length. On the cassette of March 15 we'll be offering a five part series produced by our **Pat O'Leary** on precision farming. On future cassettes we'll offer shortened versions of some regular-length features. We seek feedback on the changes, and look forward to your comments as we make efforts to accommodate the needs of broadcasters.

VIC POWELL
Office of Communications